

Netanyahu Drives Palestinians from Jerusalem - Palestinians Ordered to Destroy their Homes and Pay Thousand Dollar Fines

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Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged to step up settlement activities in Jerusalem. (Downing Street/[Flickr](#))

The Israeli authorities have issued a new raft of demolition orders to Palestinians living in [occupied East Jerusalem](#).

On Sunday, an Israeli court approved the demolition of eight Palestinian homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Semiramis. The court said the owners must destroy the homes themselves and pay fines of 49,000 shekels (\$12,667) by 1 August, [Ma'an News Agency reports](#).

The demolition orders in Semiramis were delivered just days after Israel announced that it will build 900 new homes in Ramat Shlomo, a Jewish-only colony in East Jerusalem, [according](#) to the anti-settlement group [Peace Now](#).

In March, ahead of elections for Israel's parliament, [the Knesset](#), Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) promised to expand [settlements](#) in the occupied city.

"We will continue to build in Jerusalem, we will add thousands of housing units, and in the face of all the [international] pressure, we will persist and continue to develop our eternal capital," [Netanyahu said](#).

[Rima Awwad](#), a member of the [Jerusalemites Campaign](#), a group that campaigns for Palestinian rights in the city, said Netanyahu "campaigned on a platform of de-Palestinianization of the occupied city and he is now following through on his promise."

Validating racist laws

Awwad told The Electronic Intifada that Netanyahu's plan for Jerusalem is to "drive out its Palestinian population."

A complex web of discriminatory laws regulates every aspect of Palestinian life in the city, she added.

This week's announcement to expand settlements comes less than a month after Israel's high court gave the green light to government authorities to apply the [Absentee Property Law](#) in Jerusalem.

The law, previously used to confiscate Palestinian property in present-day Israel, enables Israel to confiscate East Jerusalem property belonging to Palestinians living elsewhere in the occupied West Bank.

“The court’s decision has validated one of Israel’s most racist and arbitrary laws, enacted in 1950 primarily to confiscate Palestinian refugee property after their displacement from their homes,” [Hassan Jabareen](#), director of [Adalah](#), a Haifa-based legal rights group for Palestinians in Israel, said in a [recent press release](#).

“There is no other place in the world, not in democratic systems nor in dictatorial regimes, where such a law applies,” Jabareen remarked, adding that the law pays “no regard to [Palestinians’] protections under international law.”

Collective punishment

Last month, the Ramallah-based Palestinian rights group [al-Haq](#) [decried](#) Israel’s policy of collective punishment against Palestinians in Jerusalem.

On 13 and 14 April, Israeli occupation forces used concrete blocks to seal off the entrances of Hizma, a Jerusalem-area village, and left an explanatory sign for residents.

“To the residents of the area: a few of you are responsible for disrupting public order by their acts of riots, and because of them this barrier was set up,” the sign read.

On the first night, Israeli soldiers set up a checkpoint at the entrances and informed Palestinian motorists that vehicles were forbidden from entering or exiting Hizma.

On 24 April, Israeli soldiers shot dead 17-year-old [Ali Muhammad Abu Ghannam](#) in [al-Tur](#), a Palestinian neighborhood of East Jerusalem cut off from the city by Israel’s wall in the West Bank.

The Israeli army subsequently closed off the entrance to al-Zaim, a Palestinian part of Jerusalem cut off from the rest of the city by [Israel’s wall in the West Bank](#).

“This closure negatively affected 6,000 Palestinian Jerusalemites in al-Zaim,” al-Haq reports. “Those going into the town from Jerusalem had to take a longer route, turning a five-minute drive into one taking approximately half an hour.”

“Farih Yousef Abu Lihya, 41, owns two hardware stores and a restaurant in al-Zaim. Since the imposed closure, his income has decreased by 80 per cent,” al-Haq’s statement reports.

Incitement

These recent measures come at a time when anti-Palestinian [incitement](#) is at fever pitch.

On 19 April, right-wing Israeli youth marched through Jerusalem’s Old City signing “death to Arabs” and other racist chants, [as reported](#) by The Electronic Intifada.

The estimated 1,500 participants were escorted by [Israeli police](#) and soldiers, [according](#) to [Kifaya](#), a racism-monitoring website.

On Monday, Israel’s high court issued a ruling permitting Israelis to march through

Jerusalem's Muslim Quarter on [Jerusalem Day](#) a holiday celebrating Israel's military occupation of the city in 1967.

The court rejected a petition filed by a coalition of nongovernmental organizations asking that it prevent marchers from passing through the Old City.

The march will be held on 17 May.

"In recent years, the parade has been characterized by numerous acts of racism and violence against Arabs, as well as damage to property at the hands of marchers," the Israeli daily [Haaretz reports](#).

During last year's Jerusalem Day march a mob of Israelis were [caught on tape attacking Palestinians](#).

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